

THE CATHOLIC WORLD REPORT

From transgender to transhuman: The expanding culture of death

Transgender advocates have a much bolder vision than just redefining gender, as is evidenced by the emerging transhuman movement that promises immortality. But how real are such promises?

🕒 February 12, 2021 👤 Anne Hendershott ➦ Analysis, Features 💬 37

🖨️ Print

(Image: PapaOsmosis/Pixabay)

Most faithful Catholics have viewed the burgeoning transgender industry as encouraging a misguided belief that individuals—including even pre-school children—can change their God-given identity. However, the truth is that this rejection of human nature and natural law has opened not only the door to gender construction, it has also opened an even darker door to an emerging multi-billion dollar transhuman industry. And that industry is led by some of the wealthiest and most brilliant tech trailblazers. It is an industry that promises us that not only can we choose our own gender, but we can also choose to live forever as transhuman persons—with full citizenship rights—in a new and “perfect” body that will be created for us.

One of those trailblazers is [Martine Rothblatt](#)—born Martin Rothblatt—who was identified in a [2014 cover story](#) at *New York* magazine as “the highest paid female CEO in America.” The founder of Sirius satellite radio, Rothblatt chose to undergo radical sex-reassignment surgery in 1994. But that was only Rothblatt’s first step in his real dream of immortality. In the *New York* interview—which was held in the Bristol, Vermont home of Terasem, the Rothblatt organization devoted to achieving immortality and “cyber-consciousness” through cryogenics and Artificial Intelligence—we learn that Bina, Martine’s wife of more than three decades, is already well on her way to helping her achieve Rothblatt’s dream of immortality. In fact, Rothblatt is so devoted to his wife Bina that when he built his first immortal “[mindclone](#),” it was of Bina.

All of this emerged from the realization that one could “change” one’s gender. In the Preface to the most recent edition of his book *The Apartheid of Sex* (now re-named *From Transgender to Transhuman*) Rothblatt reported that:

I came to realize that choosing one’s gender is merely an important subset of choosing one’s form. By form, I mean that which encloses our beingness ... I came to this realization by understanding that 21st century software made it technologically possible to separate our minds from our bodies. This can be accomplished by downloading enough of our neural

connection contents and patterns into a sufficiently advanced computer and merging the resultant mindfile with sufficiently advanced software—call it ‘mindware.’

For Rothblatt—and a growing number of wealthy investors and visionaries—transhumanism is the belief that we can and should transcend human limitations. For Rothblatt, it is the natural progression from being transgendered where “one has to be willing to disregard societal rules that require gender appearance to conform to acceptable appearances for one of two legal sexes” to a rejection that one has to give in to a new “apartheid of form.” Rothblatt claims that he is “on the threshold of creating humanity and personhood outside of DNA-driven flesh bodies.”

As Rothblatt writes in *From Transgender to Transhuman*:

In a similar fashion I now see that it is also too constraining for there to be but two legal forms, human and non-human. There can be limitless variation of forms from full fleshed to purely software with bodies and mind being made up of all degrees of electronic circuitry between. To be transhuman one has to be willing to accept that they have a unique personal identity beyond flesh or software and that this unique personal identity cannot be happily expressed as either human or not. It requires a unique transhuman expression.

Warnings against the manipulation of nature

More than a decade ago, Pope Benedict XVI **warned** of the ramifications of such thinking when he denounced all attempts to “manipulate the nature of the human being.” He stated that such exploitation leads to a “self-emancipation of man from creation and the Creator.” Rejecting the post-modern conceptualization of gender as a moveable point along a spectrum that is fluid and changeable, Pope Francis has joined Pope Benedict in **denouncing** the claim that gender is socially constructed rather than God-given: “With this attitude man commits a new sin, that against God the Creator.” For Pope Francis, like Benedict, the “design of the Creator is written in nature.” This is further unpacked in *Amoris Laetitia*, where Pope Francis denounces “the various forms of an ideology of gender” that leads to the promotion of a belief in “a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female.” Further:

It is one thing to be understanding of human weakness and the complexities of life, and another to accept ideologies that attempt to sunder what are inseparable aspects of reality. Let us not fall into the sin of trying to replace the Creator. We are creatures, and not omnipotent. Creation is prior to us and must be received as a gift. At the same time, we are called to protect our humanity, and this means, in the first place, accepting it and respecting it as it was created. (par. 56)

That is the real problem for progressive visionaries; the idea that anything is created by God and thus “written in nature” is repellent and ridiculous to them. Yet, it was not too long ago that most philosophers, sociologists, psychologists and anthropologists actually believed—like the classical Greek philosophers and the Catholic Church—that a good human life was the one in accord with nature. It was uncontroversial that human nature was the source of ways of thinking, feeling and acting that occur naturally—independently of the influence of culture. Human nature was

traditionally viewed as a source of norms of conduct as well as a way of presenting obstacles or constraints on living contrary to one's nature.

Today, aside from some evolutionary and developmental psychologists, the idea of a fixed nature is now taboo in academia—and beyond. Rothblatt scoffs at what he sees as such antiquated thinking. Rothblatt writes that “transhumans” are people who have hybridized themselves with computational technology as part of humanity's effort to control its evolutionary destiny. Rothblatt credits inventor and futurist Ray Kurzweil's 2005 book *The Singularity is Near* with providing some of the inspiration for his work. But, the truth is that Rothblatt has been working toward the transhuman future for a long time.

Still, Kurzweil is important because he believes that human merging with rapidly advancing technology is the path of future evolution—producing a “civilization of enormous capability with transcosmic scope via self-replication and virtually unlimited intelligence.” Of this, Rothblatt **writes**: “*Homo sapiens* will become *Persona creatus* as it rides the journey of near infinite growth in computational knowledge that is the Singularity.” The future for Rothblatt and his wealthy investors is a future in which “people will copy ever greater portions of their mind onto software.” He goes on:

These software analogs will work, shop and communicate on behalf of their flesh masters. The more autonomous and life-like these software analogs are, the more useful they will be and hence market forces will make them increasingly human-like. At about this time some human masters will suffer bodily death but will claim that they are still alive in the guise of their software analogs. In essence, these transhumans will claim to have had a mind transplant to save their life not unlike the heart and kidney transplants that save so many lives.

Lawsuits will be inevitable over whether the transhuman or its flesh descendants control the property and whether the transhuman can get married and if so as which sex since the old body is gone. Rothblatt suggests:

Psychologists certified to determine whether someone adequately demonstrates, consciousness, rationality, empathy and other hallmark human traits could interview transhumans. Should two or more such psychologists agree as to the transhumanist's humanity, the virtual person should either be permitted to continue the life of their biological original, or if newly created, be granted a birth certificate and citizenship.

These “visionaries” predict a time when transhumans will need to be documented and would qualify for citizenship. They maintain that transhumans will be given voting rights and the right to marry. Rothblatt claims that “everyone will look to the historical precedents of recognizing people as persons rather than colored persons, and people as people rather than as gendered people.”

Envy as a form of status anxiety

Those with strong faith in the God of creation likely view Rothblatt or Kurzweil's frightening future as their prideful attempt to mimic God's creation of the world and all living creatures. It is not a coincidence that Rothblatt named his daughter Jenesis—a variation of the name of the first book of

the Bible—the book of creation. But I maintain that rather than the sin of pride, the transhuman advocates—much like the transgender advocates—are more likely suffering from the effects of the sin of envy. They envy those—including the God of creation—who have the power to create life and live forever on this earth. But faithful Christians know that such a quest for power like this is more demonic than divine.

Indeed, in my new book *The Politics of Envy* (Sophia Books, 2020) I maintain that much of the attraction to changing one's gender emerges from mimetic envy—a desire to become someone one is not. In *The Politics of Envy*, I draw upon the central theory of “mimetic desire” first postulated in the 1960s by the French philosopher of social science, René Girard (1923-2015). A devout Catholic, Girard points out that human beings desire objects and experiences not for their intrinsic value but because they are desired by someone else. Envy is really a form of status anxiety that causes a contagion of “miming” the desires of others. We are seeing that miming in the frenzy of the growth of transgenderism and we will see that in the desires of those wishing to control our very essence as human persons.

It is difficult to predict how soon the transhumanist movement will take hold. The advocate-elites are wealthy, brilliant, and politically savvy. They know where to spend their money in order to promote public policy. No one would have predicted even a few years ago that the transgender industry would attain such success as it has with President Joe Biden. His first executive order was to expand rights and privileges to the transgender community—a community that comprises less than half of one percent of the population. But most did not realize just how much influential wealth from elites undergirds the transgender movement.

There is even more wealth beginning to flow into the transhuman movement because the potential for profit is so much greater in the marketplace for transhumans. Most would be surprised to learn the names of some of the biggest funders of this movement. For many—especially those without faith in the God of Creation—the promise of living forever is indeed something to envy. This is not just some strange theory of a fictional “brave new world”, but a bold and deeply problematic promise of immortality that appears to be growing in both popularity and influence.

(Editor's note: For more on transgenderism and transhumanism, visit Jennifer Bilek's blog, [The 11th Hour](#).)

*If you value the news and views Catholic World Report provides, **please consider donating** to support our efforts. Your contribution will help us continue to make CWR available to all readers worldwide for free, without a subscription. Thank you for your generosity!*

Click here for more information on donating to CWR. **Click here** to sign up for our newsletter.

About Anne Hendershott > [102 Articles](#)

Anne Hendershott is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Veritas Center for Ethics in Public Life at Franciscan University in Steubenville, OH
